



GENERAL PLAN OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

PATHWAY ELEMENT

(Adopted by City Council on March 20, 1996)

BACKGROUND

The Town's Pathways System serves three basic and important functions -- circulation, recreation, and preservation of the open character of the Town. The pathway system is designed to complement the Town's roadway system and to enhance non-motorized circulation by providing connections between neighborhoods and local or nearby destinations. In this way, the Pathway Element is an integral part of the Town's Circulation Element, one of the basic General Plan elements required by State law. For the purposes of this discussion, the terms "path" and "trail" are used interchangeably, although a "trail" generally refers to a pathway in a more natural condition or setting.

The Town's pathway system is composed of roadside paths and off-road paths. Roadside paths are located within or adjacent to the road right-of-way. The road right of way is generally planned to have the needed width to accommodate both the paved road as well as a separated path. Roadside paths provide safe routes for pedestrians and equestrians in the Town, much as sidewalks function in more urban communities.

Roadside paths separate the car and the pedestrian or other non-vehicular user, and allow each a safer movement. The hills of the Town result in streets which often have steep sections or blind curves, which make pedestrian separation more important than with a grid street system.

Off-road paths provide links between adjacent neighborhoods and schools for pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians. Off-road paths, which connect to roadside paths or open space lands, are generally located on dedicated easements on private property (usually along property lines), through public lands, or through privately owned conservation/open space easements.

The Town's street system is designed to minimize the intrusion of the car into and through the Town, and cul-de-sacs are therefore common. This configuration can make it difficult to travel to nearby neighborhoods using Town roads. Off-road paths overcome this limitation by connecting neighborhoods for pedestrians and other pathway users.

In addition to providing access to nearby destinations, paths provide a place to exercise, to walk dogs, or to ride horses. The primary users and beneficiaries of most of these paths are local residents.

Unlike larger communities, the Town does not maintain a park system with "active" recreational uses, and instead relies primarily on the pathway network to fulfill that function. Path-related recreational activities (such as walking, jogging, hiking, bicycling and horseback riding) are among the most popular and rapidly growing forms of outdoor recreation as the public is becoming increasingly more health and fitness conscious.

Pathways are frequently designed of pervious materials to maintain the Town's open and rural setting, and to further enhance the recreational experience.

Both the recreational and circulation functions of the paths will become even more important as population continues to grow and as demand increases.

The pathway system began to be developed with the incorporation of the Town in 1956. Early off-road paths were developed primarily for equestrian and pedestrian use. Throughout the years as each new subdivision developed and each new residence was built, the use and need for roadside and off-road paths increased. The paths have expanded incrementally along with the new developments and increased population. Each new development that adds potential new users of the system contributes to the pathway system by dedication of easements and/or construction of paths or the payment of in-lieu fees which are used by the Town for improvements of the pathway system.

The system remains incomplete. Implementation of a Town-wide path system and the individual paths within it is a long term process that will take many years to accomplish. The pathway system will literally be a gift that one generation of Town residents provides to the next.

It takes a long time to complete a pathway network because paths are generally implemented one segment at a time as opportunities arise. The Town is not ever likely to have all the money that might be required to purchase all of the easements needed to develop all of the desired paths. Consequently, obtaining pathway easements and construction of pathways will continue to rely on a variety of processes, on a case-by-case basis, as opportunities arise and resources are available.

Piecing together a Town-wide path system, one small segment at a time, is a difficult, time-consuming, and fragile process. Failure to obtain a few critical links in a desired pathway can disrupt the continuity of the path and thus delay, and possibly even prevent, its eventual completion.

The fragility of this piecemeal process makes it all the more critical that opportunities be taken advantage of as they arise for they may not arise again for many years, if ever.

GOALS

G1 All residents of the Town shall have immediate access adjacent to or across the street from their residence to a pathway or pathways, for safe and convenient pedestrian and other non-vehicular travel along Town roads and to schools and community facilities, and for recreational enjoyment of the natural amenities of the community.

G2 Pathways shall also serve to provide access to and from neighborhoods in the event of an emergency.

G3 Pathways shall be separated from the roadway pavement and should meander, wherever possible.

G4 All paths shall be located and designed to preserve the beauty and natural character of the area and to safeguard the user.

G5 Except for connections to regional trail and bikeway networks, Town paths shall be designed primarily for local circulation and recreational use.

POLICIES

A. ROADSIDE PATHS

A1 Roadside paths shall be located within or immediately adjacent to the right-of-way of Town streets and on separate path easements adjacent to or over private streets. Roadside paths shall be separated from the roadway pavement by landscape buffering and shall meander, where possible.

A2 The Town Council shall adopt a list of those streets or segments of those streets that shall be planned for paths on both sides of the street.

A3 A roadside path shall be maintained on only one side of the street unless the street is included on the list adopted pursuant to Policy A2. The path may be located on alternating sides of the street, however, depending on factors such as available easements, topography, or proximity to schools or other facilities.

A4 A roadside path shall not be maintained on a cul-de-sac that serves or could serve six or fewer lots. The traffic on such streets is deemed so minor that pedestrians can safely use the paved surface as a walkway. A roadside path along a cul-de-sac may be required by the Planning Commission or Council, however, for topographic or for safety reasons, and shall be required where it would connect to an off-road path.

A5 The Planning Commission or City Council may require that an easement separate from a private street be dedicated, or that a pathway easement over the paved roadway be granted (if feasible), when the width of a private street easement of right-of-way will not accommodate both the paved surface and a separate path.

A6 Dedication of pathway easements outside of required road rights-of-way shall not affect the computation of the net area, LUF (lot unit factor), MDA (maximum development area) or MFA (maximum floor area) for a lot.

B. OFF-ROAD PATHS

B1 Off-road paths shall be located on private property on easements which have been dedicated to the Town, or over public lands. They provide connections between neighborhoods and provide direct routes to schools and open space. Cul-de-sacs should have off-road paths which connect the end of the street to adjoining neighborhoods.

B2 There are three classes of Off-Road Paths:

Class 1 -- Off-road paths for which easements have been granted to the Town for a completed route, on which a path has been developed or pathway use has been established, and which is maintained by the Town and is open for public use.

Class 2 -- Off-road paths for which easements have been granted to the Town for less than a completed route, or where the pathway easement exists but the path has not been constructed or maintained and is not open for public use. Such paths remain to be completed in the future.

Class 3 -- A planned future off-road path, as shown in the Master Path Plan. These paths may need dedication of easements over a single large parcel of land, or may require easements over a number of smaller parcels.

B3 Off-road paths are a permitted use in a conservation and open space easement, and should be reflected as such in the language of the easement, at the time of dedication.

B4 An emergency road easement shall also include dedication of an off-road path easement.

B5 The design of new subdivisions - especially those with cul-de-sac streets - shall incorporate pathway connections to nearby neighborhoods or community facilities, such as schools, and to open space areas.

B6 Dedication of off-road pathway easements shall not affect the computation of the net area, LUF (lot unit factor), MDA (maximum development area) or MFA (maximum floor area) for a lot.

B7 Off-road paths shall be maintained in as natural a state as possible, except that installed surfaces may be acceptable when paths serve as connectors to schools or neighborhoods, or where special use or topography make it necessary.

B8 Off-road paths shall be located along or as close to property lines as possible.

C. REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

The pathway system of the Town is intended primarily for the use of Town residents but it should be connected to the path and trail systems of neighboring jurisdictions.

The Town and Palo Alto paths along Arastradero Road provide links from the Town to Arastra Preserve, to Esther Clark Park via Fremont Road, Old Trace Lane, and Aric Lane trails, and to Gunn High School via Palo Alto trails. It would be very desirable if Foothill Park (City of Palo Alto) trails were also accessible from Town paths along Page Mill Road, also allowing for connection to the Skyline Trail.

Future planned access from and to Shoup Park and Redwood Grove in Los Altos, along Adobe Creek to O'Keefe Lane and the Town's path system, and a link between Fremont Road and Redwood Grove would improve pedestrian access for both cities.

The western boundary of the Town meets Rancho San Antonio Open

Space Preserve of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. This Preserve has an extensive trail system that attracts large numbers of visitors. The primary entrance to the Preserve, where extensive parking is available, is at Rancho San Antonio County Park at the end of Cristo Del Rey Drive in Cupertino. Connections into the Preserve from the Town are intended for local residents and have very limited parking (Ravensbury Avenue, Stonebrook Avenue, La Loma Drive, Rhus Ridge Road, Francemont Avenue, Hidden Villa). Access to Open Space lands should also be pursued from Olive Tree Lane.

The DeAnza trail, which Congress has designated as a national historic trail, passes through Town and should be designated on the Town's master path plan.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PATHWAY SYSTEM

A. THE MASTER PATH PLAN

The Master Path Plan shall consist of all of the following:

- 1) A book of street maps of the Town showing streets with paths planned on both sides of the street, after adoption by the City Council (see Policy A2).
- 2) A book of street maps of the Town showing the side of each street on which a roadside path is planned. Determination of which side of a street the path should be located will be made incrementally by the Planning Commission, with the advice of the Pathways Committee and the City Engineer, at the time of subdivision approval or site development approval. A determination may also be made by the Pathways Committee upon the request of the City Manager or his designee, for construction or maintenance purposes. The book of street maps shall also show the status of roadside paths for cul-de-sacs and private streets, in accordance with Policies A4 and A5.
- 3) A book of street maps of the Town showing the location of Class 1 off-road paths.
- 4) A book of street maps of the Town showing the location of Class 2 off-road paths. The Pathways Committee will review from time to time these paths to determine the status of their development and to recommend actions to convert Class 2 paths to Class 1 paths.
- 5) A map to be developed by the Pathways Committee and approved by the City Council showing future needed off-road paths. Such a map, upon adoption, will identify Class 3 paths. Off-road paths shown on the Master Path Plan of 1981 shall remain in effect until the City Council adopts the new map, but all future paths designated by the 1981 Plan, without existing easements, shall be critically evaluated relative to function, slope, and other constraints prior to adoption of the new map.

In addition to or in lieu of the documents required by 1 through 5, the Town may display the Master Path Plan through other mapping or computer data bases for public and staff use.

B. IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

- 1) Development of paths shall occur incrementally as Town funds permit and as development generates increased demand and use of the system, based on resultant increases in population. Either at the time of subdivision or site development, property owners shall be required to dedicate easements and/or construct paths on their property. Owners of property on which no path is needed shall contribute by the payment of a pathway fee. The pathway fee shall be established at an amount roughly proportionate to the cost of pathway construction on the subject lot, if a pathway were required.
- 2) All new development which is expected to result in an increased demand for use of pathways shall comply with requirements for non-vehicular access, including dedication of easements and/or construction of paths, or payment of pathway fees, as follows:
 - a. All subdivision development (except for lot line adjustments) shall be required to comply with pathway requirements, as the project would result in an increase in the number of homes (and residents) in the Town.
 - b. All proposals for new main residences and/or secondary dwellings shall be required to comply with pathway requirements, as the project would result in an increase in the number of residents in the Town.
 - c. A "cumulative" development of 900 square feet of "habitable" floor area or greater shall be required to comply with pathway requirements, as 900 square feet is considered a "major addition" requiring Planning Commission discretionary review; is generally the size of a large master bedroom and bathroom suite or three smaller bedrooms, based on typical submittals to the Town; and is roughly equivalent to the average area of floor space per Town resident, resulting in an increase (presently or in the future) in the number of residents in the Town.
 - d. Development of a barn or stables in excess of 900 square feet shall be required to comply with pathway requirements, as the project would generate additional stable capacity and place an increased burden on the equestrian use of pathways.
 - e. Other types of development proposals, such as conditional use permits or variances, would require a specific justification of the "nexus" for pathway requirements for that particular project.
- 3) Where pathway installation is required for a project, construction of the path shall occur concurrent with development of the project, unless the Planning Commission or Council determine that the path would serve no useful purpose in the near future, due to the incompleteness of the pathway segment.
- 4) A lot that contributed a pathway fee at the time of subdivision shall not be required to contribute again at the time of site development.
- 5) Pathway fees shall be deposited in a designated fund and used only for pathway projects.
- 6) The incremental development of the path system sometimes results in gaps in both the roadside and off-road pathways. Public funds available to the Town, including the pathway fees, shall be used on projects that will complete the gaps in the system.
- 7) Pathway standards shall be adopted by resolution of the City Council, to address roadside and off-road pathway design.
- 8) Site development authorities shall be sensitive to path location and design. This is especially the case for the off-road paths. The location shall be sensitive to the privacy of future residents whenever a parcel is subdivided or a lot is developed. All paths shall be located and designed to preserve the beauty and natural

- character of the area and to safeguard the user. Particular care shall be given to retaining trees and vegetative cover and to minimize grading and erosion.
- 9) Typically, off-road paths shall be located along property lines, when topography permits. Fencing along paths may sometimes be appropriate to protect privacy, so long as it does not intrude into easements or right-of-way.
 - 10) Street trees along the roadside path system should be promoted to enhance the pathway experience, but shall be located to avoid conflict with path use.
 - 11) Pathway maps showing interesting neighborhood walks should be made available so as to encourage greater use by residents.
 - 12) Property owners who damage paths on their property shall be required to repair them. Damage can occur by landscaping planted too close to the path, sprinklers near the path, slippery driveway surfaces across a path, or disking too close to the path.
 - 13) Class 1 off-road paths shall have sign posts at their entrance to help residents locate them and feel free to use them.
 - 14) Major off-road paths should be named as a way to encourage their use and to recognize historical entities associated with the Town or to honor Town residents who have contributed to the development of the system.
 - 15) The Town shall accept offers of dedication of pathway easements made at the time of development and record them so that the future pathway right-of-way is identified.
 - 16) The Town should seek donations of path easements needed to complete gaps in the system. The Town shall assume the legal and engineering costs involved with the preparation of easement donations unrelated to development and should inform residents of possible tax advantages from easement dedication.
 - 17) A Pathways Committee of residents interested in the pathway system shall be appointed by the Council. A major responsibility of the Committee shall be to suggest priorities for the Council and the City Manager regarding those paths most in need of maintenance or development. The Committee shall also be responsible for the maintenance and development of the Master Path Plan.
 - 18) Property owners shall not block pathways or otherwise impede pathway use through the placement of fences, landscaping, irrigation, mailboxes, or any other means.
 - 19) Provision for pathway crossings or bridges shall be made at appropriate locations, such as across creeks, and all roadway vehicular bridges shall be designed to incorporate pathway crossings.
 - 20) Trails and paths shall be permitted uses in open space and conservation easements. These trails shall be constructed and maintained to minimize the environmental impact upon the area.
 - 21) When a pathway crosses a driveway or walkway, the pathway surface shall take precedence. Where a paved surface is required, the crossing must be acceptable as a pathway, e.g., roughened.